



England's Northwest Regional European Partnership

Response to Commission Working Document Consultation on the Future "EU2020" Strategy

England's Northwest welcomes the opportunity to comment on the European Commission working document on the Future of the "EU 2020" strategy. The broad direction and principles to reach a "sustainable social market economy" and a "smarter, greener economy" are aims that England's Northwest share.

We welcome the European Commission's aim to restate the Lisbon strategy to take account of new challenges. This strategy must be based on the principles of **economic, social and territorial cohesion** enabling each and every region to build on its major assets and opportunities to deliver sustainable growth across Europe.

England's Northwest is in the process of developing its own **integrated regional strategy**, in consultation with a wide stakeholder group across the region. This strategy brings together the economic, social and environmental concerns of the region in a single strategy (RS2010). It sets out four priority objectives:

- capitalise on the opportunities of moving to a low carbon economy and adapting to climate change;
- build on sources of international competitive advantage and regional distinctiveness;
- release the potential of our people and tackle poverty; and
- ensure we have the right housing and infrastructure for sustainable growth.

We are pleased to see the clear synergies across our RS2010 and 'EU 2020'. RS2010 will deliver sustainable economic growth for our region which includes large urban areas alongside a significant rural economy and maritime sector.

We expect that delivery of EU 2020 will build on strong partnerships across all the levels of governance, including local, regional, national and European levels.

Delivering "EU 2020" – engaging regional and local levels

For "EU 2020" to be successful across the EU and be meaningful to its citizens, regional and local authorities need to be engaged from concept to delivery in the strategy. This principle is already established in relation to Cohesion Policy and should be embedded as best practice.

We welcome the conclusions of the European Council on 11th December 2009 calling for enhanced "***national ownership through more active involvement of social partners as well as of regional and local authorities.***"

The consultation paper is vague on this issue. It is our view that one weakness of the Lisbon Agenda was its lack of active engagement of and with the **regional and local levels**. It is important to learn from this experience to ensure a more successful implementation and results for “EU 2020”.

Sub-national bodies are responsible for the implementation of a large proportion of public investment in the EU, therefore provide a powerful lever for the success of the strategy. Involvement of all levels of **multi-level governance**, as well as social partners and civil society, will ensure a more coordinated strategy, which can be adapted to needs and opportunities available across the EU. We urge the Commission to back-up the “EU 2020” strategy with a credible, inclusive governance system, which allows everybody in the EU to benefit from and contribute to the strategy and its implementation

Economically, socially and environmentally, it is increasingly recognised that public action is more effective when it integrates rather than separate investment decisions. This is why the Northwest has moved to an integrated regional strategy. Equally, horizontal coordination across the thematic areas of “EU 2020” becomes critical. Regional and local levels of governance can assist in this.

The overall strategy of “EU 2020” must be reflected in all priorities of the European Commission going forward, in particular when agreeing the next financial perspective, to give the strategy traction. As the “EU2020” strategy must work to deliver economic, social and territorial cohesion across the Union, so must the programmes designed to deliver EU policy post 2013.

EU 2020 and Future of Cohesion Policy

Cohesion Policy plays a critical role in engaging regional and local levels in delivering the current growth and jobs agenda. Providing funds direct to regions post 2013 is a critical part of “EU 2020” if the strategy is to deliver change across European regions.

Post 2013, Cohesion Policy must be **simplified** and more emphasis must be placed on **achieving results and impact**.

One suggestion for achieving this is that regions with integrated regional strategies clearly aligned with “EU 2020”, can use their own agreed **regional strategies as the basis for Cohesion Policy interventions**. This will reduce the need for further strategies and guidelines (Community Strategic Guidelines and National Strategic Reference Frameworks), making a lighter and more delivery-focused operational plan for that region.

Territorial Cooperation is another important tool for the EU to achieve “EU 2020” goals as it enables learning from other regions and sharing of good practice across the EU. However to fully benefit from its potential it must be seen as a mainstream tool to “EU 2020” and supportive to the Open Method of Coordination and the benchmarking between Member States under the Lisbon Strategy. Territorial Cooperation assists in dialogue across borders and provides a basis for functional economic areas to work together.

Responding to the global challenges facing Europe needs a new, forward thinking approach which brings together all stakeholders and all tools at the disposal of the EU to create a cleaner, green society and an economy based on knowledge and

employment “EU 2020” provides an opportunity to put in place a strategy which will do this, but we must learn from previous mistakes and create and implement it differently.

For information

England’s Northwest RS2010 www.northwestregionalstrategy.com

The Northwest Regional European Partnership (NWREP) comprises representatives of the Northwest Regional Development Agency, 4NW – Regional Leaders Board, locally elected members, economic social and environmental partners, representatives from business, health, education, the third sector and CoR representatives.